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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0738
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3726
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1544
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1411
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1980
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN; DRL/SEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KIRF](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RESPONSE ON OUTREACH TO ACTIVISTS AND
DISSIDENTS

REF: STATE 44903

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) Turkmenistan is a tightly-controlled dictatorship where citizens are not permitted to engage in direct human rights advocacy work. There are no international human rights organizations present, including from United Nations agencies. There are also no political opposition representatives or activists in Turkmenistan who advocate democratic development. All political opposition groups reside and operate exclusively in several European states, from which they maintain websites and post information on Turkmenistan.

3. (SBU) There are, however, some small, domestic community development organizations that compete for U.S. and international grants designed to promote democracy, rule of law, community activism, and protect the rights of the disabled. In its capacity as grant provider, USAID and/or its implementing partners maintain relationships with individuals or leaders of such organizations or community groups. These interactions range from employing individuals as trainers for community activism courses to routine exchanges that occur when individuals use the services of the USAID-funded Civil Society Support Centers. The Public Affairs Section also has a small grants program that funds NGO projects, in civic education, environmental issues, or other areas.

4. (SBU) The Public Affairs Section also distributes a wide variety of printed materials on U.S. Government, U.S. history, American values, etc. It is becoming increasingly easy to provide these publications to the general public. In addition, many public events also stress awareness of issues like human rights, democratic practices, and the like, although sometimes as a secondary focus of the main program. Black History Month or similar types of events have also highlighted civil rights movements or citizens' freedom of speech, assembly, etc.

5. (SBU) Post, through the Political/Economic Section, has engaged in regular contact with the leaders of small minority religious groups that are active around the country. Over the past year, post held three religious roundtables during which time religious

activists and U.S. diplomats discussed issues of religious freedom and shared information regarding the groups' efforts to organize and legally register. PolOff also met individually with religious leaders throughout the course of the year as they dealt with issues of registration and human rights, and sought greater freedom to practice their religion. PolOff also met regularly this year with an independent journalist to consult on challenges he and his colleagues face regarding the lack of media freedom in Turkmenistan.

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